

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-05 INSE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 AID-05 /061 W
-----127018 070038Z /62

P R 060703Z SEP 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3207
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU;
SAMPATKUMAR VISIT; HONG KONG GOVT REFUGEE MEETING

REF: HONG KONG 11964

1. ON SEPT 1 GROUP OF 114 REFUGEES APPROVED FOR RESETTLEMENT IN
U.S. WERE MOVED FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU. THIS IS LESS THAN THE

122 AGREED TO BY MACAU GOVT, BUT CARPENTER WAS WORKING WITH
LIST PROVIDED BY CONGEN IN MID-JULY AND DISCOVERED AT LAST
MINUTE THERE WERE SOME FALL-OUTS.

2. SAMPATKUMAR, ACCOMPANIED BY CARPENTER, VISITED CONGEN SEPT. 5.
HE TOLD US THAT HE VISITED MACAU PREVIOUS DAY AND MET WITH
UNDERSECRETARY SANTOS, WHO AGREED THAT SEVERAL HUNDRED MORE
REFUGEES COULD BE MOVED TO MACAU FROM HONG KONG. HOWEVER,
SAMPATKUMAR EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT MACAU CANNOT BE CONSIDERED
A BASIC SOLUTION TO HONG KONG ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM BECAUSE ITS
ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY IS LIMITED AND IT TOO IS CONFRONTED
WITH DIRDIIHAIJIVALS.#WHEN WE QUESTIONED HIS STATEMENT,
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SAMPATKUMAR COUNTERED WITH INABILITY OF MACAU GOVT TO
MOVE QUICKLY ON THIS MATTER. HE NOTED HIS BELIEF THAT
SINCE CAPITAL EXPEDITURES (UNSPECIFIED) ARE NECESSARY
IN MACAU, ACCOMMODATION OF REFUGEES THERE IN END WOULD BE
ONLY 20 PERCENT LESS EXPENSIVE THAN IN HONG KONG. HE STRESSED
HIS BELIEF THAT SOLUTION MUST BE FOUND IN HONG KONG TO
INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT ACCOMMODATION PROBLEM. HE SAID

THAT UNHCR CANNOT ADMINISTER INCREASING NUMBER OF REFUGEE HOTEL ARRANGEMENTS AND THAT REFUGEES MUST BE CONCENTRATED IN FEWER RATHER THAN MORE SITES. TO THIS END, HE HAS REQUESTED HONG KONG GOVT TO PROVIDE ONE OR MORE SITES WHICH UNHCR COULD ADMINISTER ON HOSTEL TYPE ARRANGEMENT, WHICH REQUEST HONG KONG GOVT AGREED TO TAKE UNDER CONSIDERATION.

3. ON SEPT. 5 APPROXIMATELY 15 CONSULS GENERAL AND COMMISSIONERS MET AT GOVT SECRETARIAT AT REQUEST OF ACTING POLITICAL ADVISOR FOR DISCUSSION OF BOAT REFUGEE SITUATION. SAMPATKUMAR AND CARPENTER WERE IN ATTENDANCE. HKG OFFICIALS PROVIDED FIGURES ON HEAVY INFLUX AND SERIOUS CONCERN THAT SITUATION WILL BECOME WORSE UNLESS THERE ARE SUFFICIENT RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES. ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATS WERE TOLD THAT HKG AND UNITED KINGDOM WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF THEIR COUNTRIES WOULD AGREE TO RESETTLE HONG KONG REFUGEES, NO MATTER HOW SMALL A NUMBER. ACTING POLITICAL ADVISOR STATED THAT HKG WANTED MAINTAIN ITS "GENEROUS" POLICY OF ACCEPTING BOAT REFUGEES, BUT IF NUMBERS CONTINUE TO SWELL WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT RESETTLEMENT OUTFLOW, THAT POLICY MIGHT BE CHANGED. WHEN QUESTIONED, HE WOULD NOT SPECIFY WHAT REFUGEE LIMIT FOR HONG KONG MIGHT BE. HE REQUESTED AUDIENCE REPORT BACK TO HOME CAPITALS AND ADVISE HIM OF ANY RESULTS. HE STATED HKG AND UNHCR STOOD READY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DATA OR OTHER ASSISTANCE AUDIENCE MIGHT NEED FOR RESETTLEMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PURPOSES. WHEN ASKED BY ONE DIPLOMAT ABOUT HONG KONG REFUGEE HOTEL COSTS, SAMPATKUMAR STATED AVERAGE DAILY COST IN HONG KONG PER REFUGEE WAS \$8 AND WITH THIS HIGH COST UNHCR COULD FACE SERIOUS FINANCIAL CRISIS, IF REFUGEE POPULATION HERE REMAINS HIGH.

4. COMMENT. SAMPATKUMAR MADE IT APPARENT TO US THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO MOVE ANY LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU. WHILE HIS REASONS WERE NOT PERSUASIVE, IT WAS VERY CLEAR HE HAS NO ENTHUSIASM FOR MACAU OPTION. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT SUCCESS HE WILL HAVE IN OBTAINING HKG SITES TO ACCOMMODATE REFUGEES. WHEN WE ASKED IMMIGRATION DIRECTOR ABOUT THIS, HE REFUSED TO COMMENT. HKG MAY CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL REASONS IT CAN NOT DO THIS, BUT AT SAME TIME HKG IS SERIOUSLY DISTURBED ABOUT UNHCR INABILITY TO FIND ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION CAPACITY AND MAY BE FORCED TO PROVIDE GOVT SITE. AT PRESENT TIME, LAST THREE BOAT LOADS (225 PERSONS) ARE WAITING TO BE ACCOMMODATED. MEETING WITH HONG KONG DIPLOMATS REFLECTED DEEP AND GROWING HKG CONCERN IT IS FACING OPEN-ENDED SITUATION WHICH MUST BE

CORRECTED BY SIGNIFICANT RESETTLEMENT OUTFLOW.
FAILING THAT, ORR'S REMARKS CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT HKG
WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER REQUIREING GUARANTEE OF MOVEMENT
WITHIN SPECIFIED TIME BEFORE PERMITTING OTHER THAN
HONG KONG REGISTERED SHIPS TO LAND REFUGEES. IT
ALSO INDICATED HKG DISAPPOINTMENT IN UNHCR RESETTLEMENT
EFFORTS TO DATE AND GROWING BELIEF THAT SOME PRESSURE
IS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE RESULTS. SAMPATKUMAR ARRIVED
HONG KONG SEPT. 2 (SATURDAY) AND INTENDS TO DEPART
SEPT. 6. THIS IS HIS FIRST VISIT SINCE JUNE AND
AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE HE CONTINUES TO TEMPORIZE
IN THE HOPE THAT THE HKG WILL PROVIDE A LARGE
ACCOMMODATION FACILITY RATHER THAN TO DEVELOP HIS OWN
PLANS FOR DEALING WITH BASIC PROBLEMS IN CARING FOR
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A GROWING NUMBER OF REFUGEES. CONGEN WAS UNDER IMPRESSION
THAT DAILY UNHCR CARE/MAINTENANCE HONG KONG RATE WAS
AROUND \$7. IF SAMPATKUMAR WAS CORRECT WHEN HE GAVE
\$8 FIGURE, IT WOULD MEAN THAT HONG KONG UNHCR MONTHLY
COSTS ARE \$800,000 GIVEN PRESENT POPULATION.
SHOESMITH

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HONGK12304
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780363-0760
Format: TEL
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780999/aaaaddxv.tel
Line Count: 144
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2882fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 HONG KONG 11964
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1534207
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU; SAMPATKUMAR VISIT; HONG KONG GOVT REFUGEE MEETING
TAGS: SREF, HK
To: STATE GENEVA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2882fa56-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014